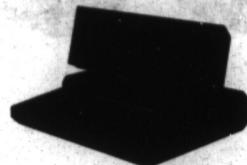


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A most valuable member of the team

Pick any church, and chances are there's a most valuable member of the team there who often gets taken for granted even though the church couldn't do without her. Is she the faithful, 30-year organist? Certainly that lady is valuable but she isn't the person. How about the WMU president, who rallies the troops and helps manage so many important programs around the church? Another good guess, but wrong again.

The answer is: The Minister's Wife. As if to make the point any more unmistakable, far too many of us are probably thinking right now, "Oops! The minister is married, isn't he? I must have forgotten." Yes, the minister is married and, to the surprise of a lot of folks, he married to a living, breathing human being with feelings. Sadly, we tend to forget that.

Where would we be without this faithful tribe known as ministers' wives? Who else would work the nursery when the regular workers have the flu? Who else would anchor the women's section of the choir? Who else would set up the Wednesday evening meal and clean up afterwards, without complaint while the rest of us act as if we're patrons in a restaurant? Who else would be willing to take

on all these responsibilities while their husband prays, studies, and prepares to address the congregation each week?

Whether in a church with a single staffer — the pastor — or a church with a dozen or more ministers, these behind-the-scenes worker bees are often the real reason that church events go so smoothly.

Ministers' duties often mean postponing or even canceling the relationship time between a husband and wife that so many of the rest of us take for granted. Much-anticipated (and much-needed) vacations are disrupted so the minister can return to town to preach a funeral. When the normal problems of raising children in our sin-filled culture show up in the minister's family, his wife knows that he is frequently somewhere else ministering to some other parents or counseling someone else's children.

All too often, she bears these personal burdens alone. The same goes for problems at church and the comments of inconsiderate people who are unnecessarily critical of her husband's ministry or harsh about her family's shortcomings which — unlike most of the rest of us — are committed in a fishbowl for all to see. They seldom ask for help, and never expect pity.

Liz Curtis Higgs, author of the best-selling book *Bad Girls of the Bible*, had special words of encouragement for women in general and ministers' wives in particular at the Ministers' Wives Conference luncheon on June 17, 2003, during the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Phoenix.

"Does it not thrill you that (women) are God's crown of creation?" she asked. "We are the last thing He made, and He said we are very good. Women were not an afterthought; we were uniquely created and uniquely equipped. I love to encourage women to embrace that and run with it.

"(Women) do carry a lot of burdens, and you may think it's your job as a minister's wife to carry people's burdens. We put it in a backpack and tell God, 'I got it,' but wouldn't it just be awesome if you could just lay your burdens down for 40 minutes? Why don't you just throw it at the foot of the cross? He says, 'Take my yoke upon you.' He's going to carry the weight of it; He's just asking

"**RULE #1 FOR EFFECTIVENESS IN THE PASTORAL MINISTRY: MARRY WELL.**"



you to walk with Him."

As fellow travelers on the Christian journey with them, we must make it a priority to minister to these beautiful sisters every day as well as when they and their families are hurting. They need to know that we are praying for them, and they need to know that we too are willing to lighten their enormous load.

Pray it, and then show by your actions and conduct that you meant it when you prayed it. You can be sure there is a most valuable member of your team out there who won't soon forget it.

GUEST OPINION:



When faith hangs by a thread

By Retha Mayfield, member
First Church, Crystal Springs

While walking on the path this morning, I was praying for revival and seeing that I needed reviving myself. A brown weed from last year, about four feet tall and leaning out into the path, almost hit me. I noticed there was something strange about this particular weed. There was something a few inches from the top.

It looked like a cocoon in the making. It was near a maypop plant that I had been watching for several weeks. I had watched as the vine grew and reached into one of the pines, twining its way skyward. Later on I saw several caterpillars, orange with black bristles on their bodies. This morning, several feet from the maypop plant, was this miracle.

I went back to the house to get my glasses. I wanted to see it in detail. I could see it really was a cocoon, half made. The top was just barely hanging by a thread. As the wind blew, the little house swayed in the gentle breeze. The bottom half of the object was finished in the

form of a cocoon. It was as if the formation was taking place from the bottom up.

The top part still resembled a caterpillar, even though the bristles seemed to be melting. I could see what looked like wings about the middle. The bottom half was an ashen color, like death. I waited a long time, trying to see the process in action and wishing for a time lapse camera to speed the process. I wanted to figure out where eyes and feet and antennae might be, but that didn't happen. This was God's process. This was on His timetable. He knows each

detail and the time required to produce the beautiful creature that will appear.

Beautiful? Well, not now. Right now it is rather dead and ugly looking. Then I remembered my prayer before this tiny miracle almost hit me in the face. I was seeing my sin through God's eyes, very much in need of revival — like the caterpillar, very ugly. How we must look to God like a caterpillar in the process of becoming something beautiful. We go through our deserts, through dry places where we hunger and thirst for God's presence. We feel as dead as the forming

caterpillar's cocoon. Our faith hangs by a thread.

God knows what each trial will do in our lives, what beautiful character trait each trial will form. When all we can see with our eyes is ugly, God can see the finished person. He can see the beauty of His handiwork. As we wait on Him, swaying in the gentle breeze of our own crises, He is constantly working on the beauty of what will be, from the ground up and the inside out.

We can claim the promise made in Isaiah 61:3 as our own — beauty for ashes that He promised to those who mourn in Israel.

Could it be that we will only be allowed to see miracles when we look at things through God's eyes? Could that be the only time that God truly has our undivided attention?

Oh, Father, when that tiny thread that holds my faith to You starts to break, grab me with Your hand and hold me till your reviving work is completed. I must trust in you.

I will look at the butterfly.

President: progress noted on pro-life issues

WASHINGTON (BP) — America has made "real progress toward building a culture of life" in the last three years, and his administration will continue to support that effort, President Bush told thousands of pro-life marchers gathered near the White House Jan. 22.

Speaking by phone from New Mexico, Bush urged those participating in the annual March for Life to "continue with civility and respect to remind our fellow citizens that all life is sacred and worthy of protection. I know as you return to your communities you will redouble your efforts to change hearts and minds, one person at a time. And this is the way we will build a lasting culture of life, a compassionate society in which every child is born into a loving family and protected by law."

After a rally on the Ellipse between the Washington Monument and the White House, tens of thousands of pro-lifers marched eastward on Constitution Avenue past the Capitol to the Supreme Court. The march has occurred on Jan. 22 every year since the U.S. Supreme Court struck down state laws against abortion and granted women an expansive right to abort their unborn children on that date in 1973.

Mississippians also marked the anniversary by holding events at the State Capitol in Jackson and at other venues around the state.

Southern Baptist public-policy specialist Barrett Duke took part in the Washington march and said he was "especially impressed by the energy of this great gathering of people."

"After 31 years, Americans' burden to save the unborn from the gruesome practice of abortion has not waned," said Duke.



LIFE SUPPORTERS — Tens of thousands of pro-life supporters, participating in the Jan. 22 March for Life in Washington, D.C., fill Constitution Avenue. (BP photo by Tom Strode)

vice president of public policy and research for the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "Despite desperate attempts at indoctrination by pro-abortion forces, most Americans still believe abortion is wrong. They showed up in Washington by the thousands, from all walks of life and every imaginable ethnic background, to demonstrate their common commitment to life for the unborn."

"Today's march showed, once again, that the commitment to end the abortion tragedy in this nation transcends practically every conceivable ethnic, religious and ideological barrier," he said.

Young people dominated the crowd, with many, if not most, of the marchers of high school age or younger. Judging by the signs, most of the marchers were Roman Catholics.

The marchers came to Washington this year at a time

when many pro-lifers are pointing to encouraging signs for their movement. Recent polls have shown young people are more pro-life than older Americans and women are becoming increasingly pro-life. The abortion rate has declined. Bush and Congress have enacted some pro-life measures during his three years in office.

In his seven-minute telephone address, the president pointed to some of his administration's actions, including the November signing into law of a ban on partial-birth abortion, which involves the killing of a nearly totally delivered child normally in the fifth or sixth month of pregnancy.

There are other pro-life measures that need to be enacted, including a comprehensive ban on human cloning, Bush told the marchers.

"We can push the limits of medical science while maintaining the highest of ethical standards," the president said. "Human life is a creation, not a commodity, and should not be used as research material for reckless experiments."

Abortion-rights advocates used the *Roe v. Wade* anniversary to unveil their latest attempt to protect the 1973 ruling. Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., and Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-N.Y., introduced the

Freedom of Choice Act. The bill would codify the *Roe* decision as federal law, striking down state and federal limitations.

Kate Michelman, president of NARAL Pro-choice America, said in a written statement that pro-choice advocates "are thrilled that leadership is acting now, before it's too late. If President Bush is re-elected, *Roe v. Wade* will be in dire jeopardy as we face the likely retirements of at least two Supreme Court justices in the coming years."

At the rally preceding the March for Life, many Republican members of Congress spoke, encouraging the marchers to re-elect Bush in November.

Abortion-rights supporters have scheduled their own march for April 25 in Washington.

On the day before the March for Life, a newly released study said the 17% decrease in abortion from 1990 to 2000 stemmed largely from state legislation. The report by the Heritage Foundation suggested economic growth may have played a small part, but more likely it was pro-life laws passed by states.

Looking back

10 years ago

A fresh team of Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers arrives in Los Angeles to continue massive meal preparations that are helping to feed thousands of Californians thrown out of homes and jobs by the January 17 earthquake and numerous aftershocks.

20 years ago

A new \$170,000 child care cottage opens four miles south of Water Valley. It is an addition to four satellite homes that the Baptist Children's Village already operates across the state, plus its Jackson campus.

50 years ago

Members of First Church, Brookhaven, approve plans for a \$215,986 building and remodeling program. These building plans will increase the present educational facilities of the church by 50%.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS

THE
SECOND
FRONT PAGE

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Violence rising

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — A bombing at the Pakistan Bible Society injured 13 people one week after a Protestant pastor was shot to death in Pakistan's Punjab province, marking a recent rise in violence against Christians in South Asia. Police received an anonymous phone call Jan. 15 warning that the Pakistan Bible Society, adjacent to the Episcopal Holy Trinity Church and School for Girls in Karachi, was a terrorist target, according to a report by Elizabeth Kendal of the World Evangelical Alliance Religious Liberty Commission. Shortly after police arrived to investigate, two people on motorcycles drove by and threw grenades into the Bible society's reading room. Two Christian staff members received serious shrapnel wounds as windows were shattered, Kendal reported. A large crowd, including police and employees of the Bible society and the church, gathered at the site. About 15 minutes after the first attack, a bomb concealed in a parked car exploded outside the Bible society. Twisted metal and glass from 12 destroyed cars were strewn throughout the area, according to Kendal's report, but no one was killed. "The attack is very similar in tactics to those used by Islamic militants fighting against the Indian army in Kashmir, but it is the first time that such a callous strategy of drawing crowds to their potential death has been used in Karachi," the Barnabas Fund, an international organization working among Christian minorities under Islam, said in a report. "The attack is the first one on a Christian institution in Pakistan in more than half a year. Pakistani Christians are fearing this may mark the beginning of another campaign of violence against them," the Barnabas Fund continued. At least 45 people have been killed and more than 90 injured in attacks on Pakistani Christians since September 2001, according to Freedom Now News.

Homosexuals pressing for marriage rights

Discovery Events are announced

The Church Planting Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) is sponsoring several Discovery Events around the state, with the goal of establishing multihousing ministries in every county in Mississippi by the end of 2005, led by the laity. Chris McNairy of the North American Mission Board in Atlanta is conference leader.

In central Mississippi, events are scheduled for:

- Region 6 — Arrowood Church, Meridian, February 6, 5:45-8:30 p.m.; supper provided. Call Lauderdale Association at (601) 483-1419 by Feb. 4 for reservations.

- Region 5 — Rankin Association, Brandon, February 7, 10 a.m.-noon; lunch provided. Call Association at (601) 939-2182 by Feb. 4 for reservations.

- Region 4 — Lake Tiak O'Khata, Louisville, February 7, 5 p.m.-8 p.m.; supper provided. Call Winston Association at (662) 773-3366 by Feb. 4 for reservations.

For more information, contact Ed Deuschle, Church Planting Director, MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3224 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 224. E-mail: edeuschle@mbcb.org.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — It was a star-studded wedding few will soon forget. Al Gore was there. So was his wife Tipper. Producer Steven Spielberg made an appearance, as did actor Tom Hanks and actress Jennifer Aniston.

The bride wore white. The other bride did, too.

Viewers of ABC's *In Style* Celebrity Weddings on Jan. 19 witnessed a slew of traditional weddings — as well as one not so traditional.

The final "wedding" of the night was one between two women, singer Melissa Etheridge and actress Tammy Lynn Michaels. They kissed. They cut the cake. Everyone applauded.

Of course, same-sex marriage isn't legal in California, where the event took place, or in any of the other 49 states. Details, though, didn't matter.

"I think it shows how far we've come when we can put a wedding like theirs on a prime-time show," *In Style's* Courtney Lumpkin told KSAT-TV in Los Angeles. "It shows how much more open we are as individuals."

It's not the first time prime time television has sided with homosexual activists.

CBS's *Amazing Race* reality program featured two men who were touted as married. They weren't, but viewers weren't told. (Incidentally, they broke up shortly after winning the contest.)

Conservatives say such programs contribute to what they call the normalization of homosexuality. As the theory goes, an objectionable behavior tends to lose its offensiveness through constant exposure. Over time, people become numb.

Conservatives wonder: If same-sex "marriage" is legalized, how much worse can it get?

In 1982 Gallup found that only 34% of people said that homosexuality should be considered "an acceptable alternative lifestyle." Last July, it had jumped to 46%.



A continuing series of articles from Baptist Press

Peter Sprigg, director of the Family Research Council's Center for Marriage and Family Studies, said legalization of same-sex marriage would be homosexual activists' biggest victory yet.

"[M]ost of the homosexual agenda to this point has been about gaining special protections, but marriage is really about gaining official affirmation and celebration and subsidization of their relationships," he told *Baptist Press*.

Sprigg believes Americans who have an "it's not going to bother me" attitude are in for a rude awakening. Those with no opinion on same-sex marriage — a Gallup poll showed that 23% of Americans were in that category — also might be surprised.

The legalization of same-sex marriage would affect everything from what is taught in public schools to what is required from businesses both big and small.

Small-town newspapers could be sued if they refuse to run a same-sex wedding announcement. Small-town public schools could be pressured to hold diversity day education programs.

Schoolchildren nationally would be told that traditional households are no different from same-sex households. Businesses giv-

ing benefits to their married employees would be required to extend those benefits to same-sex couples — perhaps even if they have a religious objection.

Bridal magazines, Oprah-type television programs, and newspaper advice columns would cater to same-sex couples. Same-sex marriage, Sprigg said, would impact every aspect of society.

"I think a lot of people have not thought through the implications of this all the way," he said.

Randy Thomasson, founder and executive director of the Campaign for California Families, has been battling homosexual activists on the West Coast for years, trying to curtail their victories however he can.

"People shake their heads at California," he said. "I as a Californian shake my head at people in other states who think that it can't happen where they live."

Several years ago a film company released *It's Elementary* a high-quality video documentary friendly to the same-sex cause. It showed how the homosexual agenda can be introduced into public schools. In one scene a girl stands up before her third-grade class and reads an essay, saying: "Although having two mothers is a problem to others, I respect that that's the way they think and I can't do anything about it. I still think that those people think stupidly." She concludes: "I am proud of my moms and enjoy marching in the gay pride march every single year with my moms." The teacher and students applaud.

Christians and traditionalists fear that similar scenes will become the norm across America if same-sex marriage is legalized.

"If the full rights of civil marriage are given to homosexual couples, then they will have to be treated the same way in every aspect of society that deals with marriage," Sprigg said. "That means that school curriculum that deals with marriage and family life will have to include same-sex marriage."

Songwriter Greg Nelson to compose for LifeWay

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Multiple Grammy and Dove award winner Greg Nelson has joined LifeWay Christian Resources as one of its exclusive songwriters and will serve a dual position in song and writer development.

Nelson, known for such Christian classics as *People Need the Lord*, said he was attracted to LifeWay for a primary reason: "The current music industry isn't geared to the church as it once was," he said. "My background is writing music for the church and the church choir. LifeWay's vision is in keeping with my roots and my passion."

His passion, he said, is writing music specifically for church worship services, church soloists and choral music all within the church music genre a field he hopes to continue influencing.

"Greg's focus is the church," said Jim Gibson, director of music, publishing and recording at LifeWay. "His larger platform is worship in the church which

aligns really well with our own vision statement and what we're all about. Greg wanted to come here because of what we're doing for the church and because he sees LifeWay as a significant player in the church music ministry of tomorrow."

What is the church music ministry of tomorrow? For Nelson, it's a transition between praise and worship music and choral music toward a blending of two styles that continue to fight for their place within today's worship service.

"I'm looking at the possibility that in the near future there will be a coming together [of the two styles]," Nelson said. "We won't be counting off how many hymns were sung or how many times a worship chorus was repeated. People will be coming together to worship in a more relaxed way."

Nelson is considered one of the creators of what is now referred to as inspirational Gospel music. Among the major artists in contemporary Christian music he has

worked with are Sandi Patty, Steven Curtis Chapman, Steve Green, Larnelle Harris, Twila Paris, and Point of Grace.

His 25-year career in songwriting, publishing and producing has yielded seven Grammy

albums, 13 Grammy nominations and 26 Dove awards with more than 61 nominations. He was the third recipient of the Gospel Music Association Impact Award for his influence in the area of contemporary Christian music.



SIGNING ON — Greg Nelson (left), one of Christian music's leading songwriters, inks an agreement with LifeWay Christian Resources to produce music for church settings as Jim Gibson, LifeWay's director of music, publishing, and recording, looks on. (BP photo)

CHANGING STANDARDS

Will it ever stop? Every time I turn around, every time I pick up the paper, and every time I watch the news it seems to me that somebody is changing the standards of life. Just a few years ago, there was a table of standard weights that would show if you were obese. Now, what did they go and do? They changed the weight standard! One day you are an ideal weight and the next day, you are overweight.

Just a few years ago the state changed the speed limits on our highways. One day you can be driving within the limits, and the next day you are a violator. Just recently, whoever the people are that say what your blood pressure ought to be decided to lower the normal limits. All of my life I have lived with good blood pressure on the lower side of the scale, and then one morning I woke up and found out that I was border-line — not so good anymore! My blood pressure had not changed, but the standard had changed! When I read the changes they had made, my blood pressure probably went up a notch or two. What I want to know is who gives someone the right to just jerk things around and decide what perfect or ideal is?

Now, please understand that I am aware that new advancements in technology and better



Directions

**Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board**

understanding of the impact of weight, nutrition, and blood-pressure are better understood than they were some years ago. It's just difficult to live within standards of good and bad when you don't know what they are. That is one of the wonderful things about knowing our God and following His guidelines for living. He does not change and the moral absolutes and the principles of rightness rooted in His character are unwavering!

The Ten Commandments have not changed. Certainly there are those in our society that would like to reshape each one of them and put them into an arena that says, "Circumstances and contexts decide whether a thing is right or wrong." But, in fact, it does not matter where you put one of the commandments — if broken, the results bring hurtful and deadly consequences. God did and does know what He is talking about and He clearly wants the best for us and desires that we avoid the pitfalls of pain

that breaking His law will bring.

Doing wrong and violating the standards of God will always result in the wrongdoer being the one who is ultimately most hurt. The momentary kind of evaluation that may make it appear as though the expediency of the moment will do you good is only a facade. You lie in order to protect yourself only to discover that in days, weeks, or months, there is a barrage from every corner, and it seems to be eating away at your soul. You have an affair to satisfy some need for personal gratification and you rationalize and adjust it in the context of the circumstances of life only to discover that in time the pleasurable moment walks the corridors of your mind, haunting you at the most inopportune moments.

God cares about us and that is why He has given us His high, unalterable standards. Please understand the ultimate standard is that God has never changed His eternal standard

for life everlasting! There was, is, and always will be just one way to Heaven and that is Jesus Christ, who gave His life on the cross and rose from the dead to forgive our sins. He is God's only provision for salvation. It has never changed.

Just think about these verses — not as a proof text of my point, but as the clear teaching of Scripture:

• John 14:6 — "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

• Acts 4:12 — "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

• I Timothy 2:5 — "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus..."

These and multiple other Scriptures teach that Jesus is the way to be saved. It is not Jesus plus church membership. It is not Jesus plus baptism. It is not Jesus plus good works. It is not Jesus plus anything! It is Jesus alone who gives us life everlasting. Whatever you may depend on other than Jesus will fail; but, when you depend on Him, rest assured that life and peace can be yours forever.

Nominees sought for MBC posts

Members of the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Committee on Nominations will soon begin meeting and reviewing the trustee/board member positions on the boards and commissions of the Mississippi Baptist Convention for 2005.

According to Alan Woodward, committee chairman and pastor of First Church, Ellisville, there are a limited number of vacancies to be filled on the following boards and commissions:

- Board of Ministerial Education
- Christian Action Commission
- Education Commission
- Historical Commission
- Baptist Children's Village
- Mississippi Baptist Foundation
- Baptist Health Systems, Inc., Jackson
- Baptist Memorial Health Care System, Inc., Memphis
- Blue Mountain College
- Mississippi College
- William Carey College
- Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

The Nominating Committee will work in conjunction with the heads of the institutions and agencies in bringing a list of nominees to be approved by the messengers at the 169th annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention on October 26-27.

Nomination forms can be obtained by contacting the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, Executive Administration, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530, Telephone (601) 292-3201 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 201. E-mail: bbox@mcb.org.

Completed forms should be mailed to the Committee on Nominations, MBCB Executive Administration, at the above address to be received by May 15.

Annie offering sets new record, falls short of goal

BIRMINGHAM, AL. (BP) — Southern Baptists set another record in giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions in 2003. Robert E. (Bob) Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), announced Jan. 10 during the annual meeting of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) executive board that Southern Baptists gave \$49,650,279 last year.

Mississippi Baptists gave \$2,966,514 to the Annie Armstrong Offering in calendar year 2003.

"The 2003 Annie Offering was one percent over the previous year. Considering the economic downturn we've experienced, that's quite remarkable," Reccord said. "The influence of WMU across North America is what helps Southern Baptists focus on the mission, the missionaries and the offering that supports them. On their behalf, thank you."

The year-end total was nearly seven percent short of the \$53 million national goal, however, and continues a trend of stagnant and — in some cases, declining — mission offerings among Southern Baptists.

"We are so thankful for the faithfulness of Southern Baptists to give at an increased level last year," Reccord said, "but we simply are unable to keep up with skyrocketing costs such as health insurance which is going up 14% per year. Although mission offerings have generally increased annual-

ly, when adjusted for inflation they have been flat for 20 years."

Inflation for 2003 was nearly two percent — twice the rate of the AAEO increase. Over the past three years the offering increased only 2.5% while the inflation rate was about six percent. Reccord said NAMB is unable to fill hun-

"With an estimated 228 million lost people in the United States and Canada — seven out of 10 people — there is a growing spiritual hunger around us. Our charge is to help Southern Baptists share the Gospel with every person in North America," Reccord said.

WMU initiated the national mission offering in 1895 to support SBC missionaries in the United States. In 1903 the offering was named in honor of WMU's founder, Annie Armstrong, a tireless missions champion. Nearly \$1 billion has been given since that time.

The 2004 Offering will be promoted in most Southern Baptist churches this spring between the March 7-14 Week of Prayer for North American Missions and Easter on April 11.

The 2004 goal is \$54 million, although the offering has met the national goal only twice in the past 20 years.

The Annie Armstrong Easter Offering supplies more than 44% of NAMB's budget, and 100% of the offering supports 5,176 missionaries and their ministries. Thirty-six percent of NAMB's income comes from churches' gifts through the SBC Cooperative Program.

For more information about the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the Week of Prayer, go to www.AnnieArmstrong.com, and for information about NAMB go to www.namb.net.



dreds of missionary positions as a result.

"Right now, NAMB and our state convention partners have 181 vacant missionary positions in the U.S. and Canada. We are also unable to fund nearly 100 semester missionaries and more than 100 summer missionary positions because of the lack of gifts," he said. "We have nearly stopped enlisting missionaries, because we have 48 missionaries approved and ready to serve but no funds to send them."

JUST FOR THE RECORD

Crossview Church, Brandon, burned the note that frees them from all debt after only ten years from building



Crossview Church Note Burning, Brandon

their facility. Pictured are Sam Creel, pastor emeritus, Joyce White, Don Williams, pastor, and Jimmie Lane.

Calvary's Kids of Calvary Church, Pascagoula, sponsored a Lottie Moon Christmas Mail Box raising \$312.25. Pictured is Kathy Duren.

Calvary Church, Pascagoula, exceeded their \$2,000 Lottie Moon goal. A total of \$2,570.25 was received. Pictured (from left) are Johnny Beaver, pastor, Merle Ivy, and John Lewis standing in front of 100 pairs of empty shoes that were filled at \$20 a pair.

On January 4 the Bethlehem Congregation and Iglesia

Misionera Nuevo Pacto Congregations, both of Laurel, had a joint worship service where the two congregations entered into a sponsorship agreement. Bethlehem Church agreed to sponsor Nuevo Pacto for three years. Ed Dueschle and David Alexander, both of MBCB, and Alan Nix, Jones County Baptist Association, participated in the service. Gustavo Salazar is pastor of Nuevo Pacto and Cary Kimbrell is pastor of Bethlehem.

students. This is only one event for the internationals in Starkville.

Goss Church, Columbia, presented their pastor and staff with Christmas bonuses on December 14. Mark McArthur, pastor, and his wife Gail (pictured) were also presented with a quilt made by Stitches of Love.

The Mission Friends at Macedonia Church, Petal, had a Lottie Bank Parade to raise money for Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Members of Macedonia filled Lottie Banks with loose change during December. Almost \$400 was collected.



Kathy Duren



WOM Dinner Participants of First Church, Starkville



Beaver, pastor; Ivy, and Lewis



Gail & Mark McArthur



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JUST FOR THE RECORD

The Acteens of Evergreen Church, Louisville, hosted the WMU luncheon December 6. The Acteens shared the NAC video and informed the WMU ladies of upcoming mission projects for the youth and Acteens this year, Rock On.

The Acteens of Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian, spent a

weekend discovering God's standard for purity in their lives. Many decisions for Christ were made.

The Children in Action from Monument Drive Church, Tupelo, raised \$147 from the craft fair in December for Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Pictured (from left,



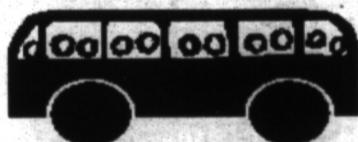
Acteens - WMU Luncheon, Evergreen Church, Louisville



Acteens of Mt. Horeb Church, Meridian

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Monument Drive Church, Tupelo



Stan Buckley and Family

front) are Blake Owen, Reid Tackett, Caleb Russell, Kelly Russell, (back) Stefan Russell, Tanner Kidd, Whitney Haley, Ashley Pulse, and Jacob Owen.

Graham Scott, Emily Thomas, (back) Celeste Cade holding Adam Thomas, Terri Alford, Penny Scott, and Dale Scott.

Members of Clarke-Venable Church, Decatur, honored the Stan Buckley family (pictured) with a reception in their honor on January 18 in the church fellowship hall. Buckley has been called as pastor of First Church, Jackson.

The youth of Pleasant Hill Church, Carthage, recently visited the Baptist Children's Village. They toured the campus and dropped off presents the church had taken up. Pictured (from left, front) are Savanna Alford,

The Children In Action, CIA Agents, of Evansville Church, Coldwater, created Doors of the World to raise money for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Each Sunday School door was displayed with a country missionaries are serving in. Pictured (from left, front) are Gaelan Heath Bardo, Morgan Riley, Tee Dandridge, Savannah Riley, (middle) Cody Worley, Jenny Dalton, Alan Lentz, (back) Caitlin Dandridge, Jeannie Thompson, and Holly Houston.



Youth of Pleasant Hill Church, Carthage



Children of Evansville Church, Coldwater

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NAMES IN THE NEWS

Kevin Coughran recognized recently for having 16 years perfect attendance in Sunday School at Utica Church, Utica. Pictured (from left) are Mark Ezelle and Coughran. Ben James is pastor.

Eighth Avenue Church, Meridian, recently ordained Allen Rickles and Bob Smith as deacons. Pictured (from left) are Donald Gentry, pastor, Kim Smith, Smith, Rickles, Julie Rickles, and Reba Gentry.

Pleasant Ridge Church, Dumas, recognized Acy Davis for 40 years of deacon service. He was honored with a roast by his fellow deacons and was presented with a faithful servant ring. Davis is pictured with his wife Katie Sue. Don Wilson is pastor.

First Church, Columbia, will hold a women's confer-



Mark Ezelle and Kevin Coughran

ence, Hearts of Hope, featuring Renee Coates Scheidt, on February 6-7. Times a 6-7:30 p.m. on Friday and 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. on Saturday. The cost is \$20 in advance and \$25 at the door. For more information, call (601) 736-2608.

The southern gospel group, The Mystery Men Quartet, will be in concert at Immanuel Church, Greenwood, on February 21 at 7 p.m. A love offering will be collected.

The Men's Ministry of First Church, Madison, will hold the Annual Wild Game Dinner February 19 at 6:30 p.m. Prices are \$10 for adults and \$5 for children. Jimmy Houston will be speaking. Tickets are available by calling (601) 856-6177 ext. 200 or from men in the church.

Ebenezer Church, Bassfield, will hold bible study, Second Coming, February 1 at 6 p.m. and February 2-4 at 7 p.m. Bill Nobles will be leading the study.



Katie Sue and Acy Davis



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS



Gentry, pastor; The Smiths, The Rickles, and Reba Gentry

OBITUARIES

Services for J. Hardee Kennedy were held December 31 at Pleasant Grove Church, Vossburg, with burial in the church cemetery.

Kennedy, 88, of Quitman, died December 28 at Heartfelt Hospice. He was an educator for 40 years, serving most of the time as professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at NOBTS and later as academic Vice President of the Seminary. Ordained to the ministry by the Harmony Church, Clarke County, he has continued active work in the churches for 66 years.

He served on committees of the Southern Baptist Convention and the Baptist state conventions of Mississippi and

Louisiana. His published writings include six books and numerous journal articles, all in the area of Biblical studies. In recent years, he has been honored with special ceremonies and awards by Mississippi College and NOBTS. Pleasant Grove Church named him pastor Emeritus in 1996.

Survivors include a daughter, Jeannine Kennedy Thames; a grandson, Christopher Thames; a sister-in-law, Helen Lively Stone; and a brother-in-law, Charles S. Lively.

The family suggests that memorials be made to the Cemetery Fund of The Pleasant Grove Church, c/o Marshall West, 12044 C. R. 280, Vossburg, MS 39366.

Taronta Antonne Fredrick Cole died December 25. Services were held at New Life Church, Gulfport, December 30 at 1 p.m. with Rossie L. Francis and Keith Thrash officiating.

Cole was pastor of New Life Church. He served as chaplain to several businesses and Christ-centered organizations along the Gulf Coast.

Survivors include four children, Ricardo Lopez, Tamekia Shonta, Gabrielle Lanita Carla, and Taronta Jr.; one sister, Tamara Michelle Cole; two nephews, Tagameon and Caleb; four grandchildren, Ashtin, Ariel, Asia, and Denontras; two aunts, Onie Lee Powell, Myrtle Taylor; one great aunt, Ora Lee Austin; and eight cousins.

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



Chapman, pastor; and Flurry

On December 14 Jamie Chapman, pastor, recognized Gladys Johnson Flurry for 62 years of membership and dedication to Red Creek Union Church, Jackson County. She was presented with a plaque and flowers. A luncheon followed.

Montevista Church, Eupora, will hold a dedication ceremony for their newly remodeled sanctuary February

1 beginning at 10 a.m. Lunch will be served at noon. Hymn singing begins at 1 p.m. followed by Fishers of Men until 2:30 p.m. John Windell Lancaster is pastor.

Williamsville Church, Kosciusko, will host Life Action, a ministry dedicated to living and teaching practical, daily application of the Word of God, February 8-18 in an eleven day crusade February 8 at 9:45 a.m. and weekdays at 6:30 p.m. The Saturday Family Revival Seminar will be 9 a.m.-1 p.m. For more information, call (662) 289-4294.

Ruth Church, Ruth, ordained three men as deacons September 19. Pictured (from left) are Bobby White, John Lambert, and Larry Williams.

Mt. Zion Church, Brookhaven, will present Heaven's Gates and Hell's Flames at the Rea Auditorium, Copiah-Lincoln Community College, February 8 at 6:30 p.m. and February 9 and 10 at

7 p.m. Admission is free. Nursery and children's ministry will be provided. For more information, call (601) 833-8018 or (601) 643-5722.

Mt. Vernon Church, Liberty, will present the Dumplin Valley Trio January 31 at 6 p.m. Clint Penlebar is pastor. For more information or tickets, call (601) 542-3345 and leave a message.

New Hope Church, Mt. Olive, will hold super attendance Sunday School and worship and a groundbreak-

ing ceremony on February 1 at 10 a.m. Dinner on the grounds will follow.

New Hope Church, Mt. Olive, will present Lonnie Moody, a Christian comedian, on February 15 at 6 p.m.

Parkway Church, Houston, had a Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal of \$3,000 and gave \$3,624. Gregg Thomas is pastor.

Society Hill Church, Oakvale, recently ordained Mackey Pierce as a deacon. Tommy Broom is pastor.



Bobby White, John Lambert, and Larry Williams

STAFF CHANGES

Claudia Hawkins has accepted the position as pianist and Ellen Carter has accepted the position as organist at Calvary Church, Pascagoula.



Hawkins

ordained at Janice Church, Brooklyn. He is a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi and NOBTS. He is currently enrolled in the doctoral program at NOBTS.

Pastor of Good Shepard Church, Thomastown, effective January 11.

John Vess has been appointed as Volunteer Coordinator for South Mississippi HomeCare and Hospice Program. He served as a PRN Chaplain for Natchez, Vicksburg, Jackson, Meridian, Brookhaven, Magee,

Laurel, and Waynesboro prior to this. Vess is a graduate of Samford University, LSU, and NOBTS. He is a member of the Association of



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Professional Chaplains and First Church, Brandon. For more information on the SMHH Hospice Program or the Volunteer Program, call (800) 217-3874.



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COLLEGE & SEMINARY NEWS

Forrest General Hospital (FGH) and the William Carey College (WCC) School of Nursing have announced a new program totaling \$122,500 to offer scholarships to eligible students who wish to one day serve as nurses in the Pine Belt. Those interested in the Forrest General Scholars Program can contact the school of nursing at (601) 318-6147. Application preference during the selection process may be given to students from the 16 county area served by FGH.

Hardy Church, Grenada, has presented Zachary Jenkins, Enid, with a scholarship to pursue an education toward Christian service at Blue Mountain College. For more information, contact Hardy Baptist Church, c/o Mrs. Guy E. Smart, 3751 Riverdale Rd., Grenada, MS 38901.

Homecomings & Revivals

Hurricane Creek, Sandy Hook: Revival Feb. 15-18, lunch at noon; Carroll Roberson, guest speaker; Curtis Roland, pastor; for more information, call (601) 736-9583.

McDowell Road, Jackson: 50th anniversary April 25; if you were ever part of this church, call (601) 372-1594 or (601) 372-1598 and leave name and address so information can be sent.

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THE BAPTIST CHILDREN'S VILLAGE currently has an opening for a single woman to fill the position of live-in child care worker. The position is full-time with good salary and benefits. Please contact Peggy Taylor at (601) 922-2242 or ptaylor@baptistchildrensvillage.com.

NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH in Meridian, Miss., seeking a full-time Associate Pastor of youth and education. Please send resumes or letters of interest to New Hope Baptist Church, attention search committee, 6573 Highway 145 South, Meridian, MS 39301.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

SEEKING PEN PALS

Editor:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Chinese Christians who are taking English in their country and who want American pen pals. The National Fellowship of Baptist Educators (NFBE) is seeking Christian young people who will answer at least one letter from Chinese students who have written letters "to an American friend." After the first exchange of letters, the correspondence might be continued by e-mail or regular mail. We will provide guidelines on ways that students may share their faith and be a Christian influence in a country where missionary work is restricted.

This makes a great project for a Sunday School class, Acteen/Challenger group, or any Christian youth organization. Individual students may also participate.

To request letters or for further information, contact me at Samford University, P.O. Box 292305, Birmingham, AL 35229. Telephone: (205) 822-4106. E-mail: jfcarter@juno.com. Give the name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address (if available) of the group leader to who we may send the letters. Tell the number of letters needed from students in grades seven through nine and the number from grades 10-12. Give the name of the group that is participating and if an American teacher would like to correspond with a Chinese teacher, let us know.

We'll look forward to hearing from any person or group who is interested.

John T. Carter, Exec. Dir.
NFBE, Birmingham

STAND ON WORD

Editor:

I've been thinking about the "great cloud of witnesses" that gave inspiration to the early church. There have been many in our Baptist life like Roger Williams, William Carey, Lottie Moon, and George Truett.

However, my mind goes to our present situation and I wonder how we are adding to this cloud. Everything seems so unsettled. Some men have to be in control and have the last word, even to the point that we now have our own "Baptist Bible."

Are we concerned about whether this pleases God, or do we just bow to the men in control and walk under this burden? I have been a born-again Christian in the Baptist church for about 75 years; never have I needed an intercessor between me and my Lord.

This is God's Word that we do not need an intercessor. God's Word is a rock on which we can stand, believe in, and live by, knowing He is same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Lou Carroll
Gulfport

SHUT OUT

Editor:

I find it interesting that International Mission Board (IMB) President Jerry Rankin now criticizes Keith Eitel's criticism of the Board, terming it "non-biblical subversive behavior" and "blatant disregard for the truth." Aren't these the same words that were thrown about between fundamentalists and moderates before the Rankin-termed "conservative resurgence"?

If the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering fails each year to meet its goals and the IMB's budget must be cut, maybe it is because lifelong Baptists like myself, while still giving to their local church and Lottie Moon, feel shut out of the current leadership paradigm and are quietly giving our money to other mission groups where they are made to feel like an active partner and not just a contributor.

George Luter
Jackson

CRITICISM UNDUE

Editor:

It has been said that the quality of one's performance can be rightly judged by the source and intensity of one's detractors. If the above statement is true, then we can conclude that the performance of Jerry Rankin as president of the International Mission Board (IMB) is on the right course and the program is being very ably managed.

Over the past several months Rankin has been openly accused of being both too rigid and too compromising. A short time ago certain liberal-leaning editorial writers, along with a bevy of "breakaways," were lambasting him. They were accusing him of behaving like a modern-day Attila the Hun for requiring missionaries to subscribe to the Baptist Faith and Message. Now he is being accused of being a present-day reincarnation of Neville Chamberlain by some seminary faulty and administrators.

Rankin does not deserve the criticism that is being heaped on him. Our focus should be on the Great Commission instead of looking for someone to criticize. Rankin is faced with the responsibility of taking the Gospel to all people. He is attempting to do this job in an environment of constant criticism, the fracturing of the Convention, and budget shortfalls. He deserves our support, not our criticism. It is time we got down on our knees before our Lord and repented, prayed, and pried open our wallets.

Lenward Lee
Brooklyn

DON'T WITHDRAW

Editor:

I have read with dismay about the recommendation of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) study com-

mittee that the SBC withdraw from the Baptist World Alliance (BWA). Hopefully the SBC Executive Committee will not approve this recommendation, but it will not surprise me if they do.

It seems that for some time now our national SBC leadership has been withdrawing fellowship from more and more Baptists who do not hold to their own narrow views. Southern Baptist missionaries around the world will be hard pressed to explain to national Baptists in the countries where they serve why Southern Baptists no longer wish to fellowship with them through BWA.

I have personally experienced the effectiveness of the BWA in global mission when Southern Baptists, because we were Americans, were prohibited from entering certain countries.

I know personally many of the Baptist leaders from around the world who are literally pleading with Southern Baptists not to withdraw from the BWA. Believe me, the world-wide influence and effectiveness of each body will be weakened. Baptists in other countries are not "liberal" simply because they are different culturally from Southern Baptists. Missionaries understand that "different" doesn't mean "wrong" or "liberal".

My heart aches when I see actions like this within the SBC. I served for 27 years on the mission field. My hope and prayer is that politics will be put aside and that spirituality and concern for unity in global mission and outreach will prevail, resulting in continued relations between the SBC and BWA.

O. Errol Simmons
Hattiesburg

Editor's note: Simmons is an International Mission Board missionary emeritus to Central and Eastern Europe.

SUPPORT BWA

Editor:

A decision by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee to recommend that the SBC withdraw complete funding support for the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) would be tragic. Should that happen, my prayer is that convention messengers will vote it down and restore full support.

Historically, Southern Baptists have placed high emphasis on the absolute authority of the Bible, evangelism/missions, local church autonomy, the priesthood of all believers, religious liberty, and the separation of church and state. We have celebrated our "unity in diversity" and have respected differences of opinion on issues that were subject to interpretation. These same kinds of Baptists make up the member bodies of the BWA.

Charges that the BWA is influenced by liberalism are patently false. Baptists may disagree on certain issues like the ordination of women or on methodology, but we do not disagree on essential doctrines.

SBC messengers should prayerfully ask: How will this decision impact global Gospel witness? What difficulties will this create for missionaries that relate to national Baptist bodies (conventions)? Do we realize how much of our witness to the world will be harmed because we cannot work together?

What would Jesus think about this as a response to His prayer "that they may all be one" so that the world may believe" (John 17:21)? Why should we have to reinvent the wheel by establishing another global Baptist fellowship?

I plead with fellow Southern Baptists to keep our historic relationship with the BWA in place.

James D. Williams
Memphis

Editor's note: Williams is executive director of the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship in Memphis and former president of the defunct SBC Brotherhood Commission. He has served on the BWA General Council and on various BWA commissions and committees.

ABORTION ENDED?

Editor:

Will 2004 be the year when abortion is ended in Mississippi? We are highly committed to doing everything possible for this to be true. Here are some of the plans:

- Pass two pieces of legislation, one to protect the rights of healthcare workers who do not want to participate in abortions, and the other to gather data on the numbers of women suffering complications following abortion. We do not believe the level of care provided in abortion clinics can stand up to careful scrutiny.

- Continue to pray, counsel, and witness at Jackson's abortion clinics.

- Start new pro-life groups in other areas of the state.

- Continue to promote fervent, intentional prayer against abortion.

- Pray for and support the possible new Crisis Pregnancy Center across from the Briarwood Drive abortion clinic in Jackson.

- Please continue to stand with us!

Pat Cartrette, president
Pro-Life Mississippi
Jackson

Editor's note: Cartrette can be reached at 618 Briarwood Drive, Suite D, Jackson MS 39211. Telephone: (601) 956-8636. E-mail: rtlj@jam.rr.com. Pro-Life Mississippi was previously known as Right to Life of Jackson.

FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Disciplined Worship

Psalm 95:1-7; Hebrews 10:19-25

By Ken Anderson

An old Saint was asked, "Which is more important, reading God's word or praying?" To which he replied, "Which is more important to a bird, the right wing, or the left?" All Christian disciplines are important. This unit of five lessons identifies areas of Christian disciplines.

CALL TO WORSHIP - PSALM 95:1-7:

Here the worship leader gave two invitations to the congregation to worship. In response, the congregation gave two positive confessions of faith.

THE FIRST INVITATION - VERSES 1-2:

The worship leader called the people to sing a hymn of joyful praise to their unconquerable defender and helper, the "rock of their salvation" (v. 1). Next, he invited them to proceed into the presence of God with gratitude and song (v. 2).

THE FIRST RESPONSE - VERSES 3-5:

The congregation confessed that God is above all others gods because He is the creator of the world. In His power are the depths of the earth and the peaks of the mountains (vs. 3-4). He alone made the sea and the land (v. 5). No one else can make such a claim.

THE SECOND INVITATION - VERSE 6:

The worship leader called the people to enter worship with specific postures of worship. In homage they were to prostrate themselves and then to posture themselves in a kneeling position.

THE SECOND RESPONSE - VERSE 7:

In verse three, the worshipers recognized God as creator; here their response was more personal - "Our God" and "the people of His pasture." They confessed confidence in God's



Anderson

responsibility and ability to care for them.

CORPORATE WORSHIP - HEBREWS 10:19-25:

This section of scripture can be divided into two parts. The first part encourages believers to worship God in His presence (vs. 19-22). The second part exhorts the believers to be faithful in corporate worship (vs. 23-25).

WORSHIP IN HIS PRESENCE - VS. 19-22:

The author encouraged his readers with three truths. First, the effectiveness of Christ's sacrifice (by the blood) provides believers with confidence or hope to enter into God's presence (the holiest) (v. 19). This does not mean that one can crash into the presence of God in a frivolous manner. It means believers are endowed with a freedom of entrance into the sacred presence of God. Second, believers are empowered to walk in a "new and living way" (vs. 20). Third, believers have Jesus as their great High Priest. "Over the house of the Lord" has been interpreted to mean the Christian community, the church, or heaven (v. 21). All of

this is accomplished by Christ's atoning work on the cross; and therefore demands a positive response of "drawing near" from believers. The author listed four elements involved in a "drawing near" to God. First, the worshipers must have a pure or sincere heart without hypocrisy. Second, they are to have "full assurance" or confidence in Christ's sacrifice and atonement for sin. Third, an internal cleansing of Christ's blood has cleansed the believer's heart with no lingering accusations of unforgiven sin. Fourth, the outward cleansing is a symbol of the internal cleansing (v. 22).

WORSHIP TOGETHER - 19, 23-25:

The author exhorts his readers not to waver or abandon the Christian walk but to "hold fast," to persevere. They can trust God's promise (v. 23). To this end, they have an obligation to support each other by mutual encouragement that promotes love and works (v. 24). Assembling together for worship is essential to stimulate love and good works. Some were giving up the discipline of corporate worship (v. 25).

Worship is a response: In both focal passages, worshipers recognized the worth of God.

In Psalms, the worshipers recognized God as creator and shepherd. In Hebrews, Christ is the great High Priest and the provider of a new and living way. Worship is a heartfelt response to the supreme worth of God as he really is.

Worship is a verb: Psalm 95 is an excellent reminder that a true worshiper is a participant, not an observer.

Worship is a ministry: The author of Hebrews encouraged believers to "consider one another." Rowland Forman wrote, "I ask not 'What will meet my need?' but 'What kind of worship does God delight in?' and 'How can I best serve and bless the people around me?'" (Moody, July-August 2002, p. 30).

Worship is a discipline: Worship cannot be switched on at the call to worship on Sunday. Worship requires a disciplined life long before worship starts. It includes the discipline of private worship, worship at home, at work etc.

Anderson is pastor emeritus of First Church, Saltillo.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Be Wise About Relationships

Proverbs 12:18; 28:23; 15:1; 25:15; 12:19; 16:28; 17:9; 14:17,29; 15:18; 20:3; 16:32; 19:11; 22:24-25; 12:16; 17:14,19; 26:21; 14:22; 17:17

By Ann Maniscalco

"Most people are bothered by those passages in Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I always noticed that the passages in Scripture that trouble me most are those which I do understand."

Mark Twain mouthed those words many years ago, and they still hit home today. Just as it takes consistent effort to promote bodily health, so must we continually strive to build and maintain healthy relationships.

CHOOSE YOUR WORDS CAREFULLY (PROV. 12:18; 28:23; 15:1; 25:15; 12:19; 16:28; 17:9):

Here are two easy tests to reveal our commitment to Christ — how easily we let loose of our

money (for kingdom purposes), and how tightly we rein in our tongue. James shows the destructive power of the tongue; he says, "no man can tame [it]..." (James 3:2-8).

These verses in Proverbs show the contrasts between wise and ungodly use of speech. Such speech is "like a piercing sword" (12:18), it "stirs up wrath" (15:1), "spreads conflict" (16:28), and "separates friends" (16:28 and 17:9). Conversely, wise speech "brings healing" (12:18), "turns away anger" (15:1), "promotes love" (17:9), and "exerts great influence" (25:15). Truly, no person can tame the tongue, but God can, as He indwells and controls the believer.

CULTIVATE PATIENCE (PROV.



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14:17,29; 15:18; 20:3; 16:32; 19:11):

A patient Christian honors the Lord; the "quick-tempered" one (14:17) can do irreparable damage to the cause of Christ. The one who blows up easily is said to "act foolishly" (vs. 17) and "promote foolishness" (vs. 29). The patient person, however, is described as one who "shows great understanding" (vs. 29). The hot-tempered person "stirs up conflict" while the patient one "calms strife" (5:18) and "seeks to resolve a dispute" (20:3). Jesus, in the section of Scripture known as the Beatitudes, reveals how He values those who seek peace: "Blessed are the peacemakers, He said, for they will be called Sons of God" (Matt. 5:9 NIV).

He who exercises patience is a person of great strength. God's word describes patience as "better than power," and the one who controls his temper is said to be superior to he who

"captur[es] a city" (16:32).

A wise person's insight gives him patience, allowing him to "overlook an offense" (19:11). He knows God is in control (Romans 8:28). Jesus is our example. When he faced his persecutors at Golgotha, "he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly" (1 Peter 2:23 NIV).

CONSIDER CONSEQUENCES (PROV. 22:24-25; 12:16; 17:14,19; 26:21; 14:22; 17:17):

We are commanded not to "make friends with an angry man," or even to spend time with such a person. Why? "Because of the consequences you will learn his ways..." (24:22-25). It's a challenge to keep our moral values intact if most of our time is spent with those who exhibit ungodly lifestyles.

Consequences — the old adage, "Look before you leap," is a secular way of summing up this section's verses. When irritated by a person or a situation,

the sensible man (the one who follows the ways of wisdom) will not let his emotions get the best of him, whereas the foolish person lets his displeasure be quickly known (12:16).

As believers, we should beware of the consequences of our reactions to frustrating situations. Just as wood provides fuel for a fire, so "a quarrelsome man" (vs. 26:21) ignites strife. This person seems bent on starting conflicts (17:14) and offending others (17:19); his evil plans lead him astray (14:22). In contrast, the wise man's actions help assuage disputes (17:14); his good plans bring about "loyalty and faithfulness" (14:22). He who stirs up trouble brings discord and division; the one who "pursue[s] the things that make for peace..." (Romans 14:19 NKJV) promotes unity. As Paul taught the Galatians, a man reaps what he sows (Gal. 6:7 NIV). In your personal life and church relationships, what are you sowing?

Maniscalco is member of First Church, Ocean Springs.

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in the Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

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THE BAPTIST

RECORD

Christians seek to rescue Indian prostitutes

ALLAHABAD, India (BP) — Shobha has sad eyes. Tired eyes. Not dead eyes, yet — but dying. The heavy makeup on her face can't hide it. She sits in a doorway at the end of a grimy lane in Allahabad, a city in north India, and warms her hands over a brazier against the chill.

A dingy sweater the color of faded peaches covers part of the garish blue sari she wears to attract customers.

Her 4-year-old daughter Aiesha alternately hugs her knee or plays a few steps away.

It's a slow day. The cold wave — or the recent police raid on the area — has temporarily driven away clients for Shobha and other prostitutes huddling in other doorways nearby. A narrow strip of clear sky is visible above the soot-covered, crumbling colonial buildings that hover over the street, but it seems impossibly far away.

TRAGIC LIFE — Shobha sits in a doorway at the end of a grimy lane with her four-year-old daughter Aiesha, as a potential client walks by. Sometimes Shobha "entertains" one man a day, sometimes five or more. The going rate is 30-50 rupees per visit, about \$1. (BP photo)



Sometimes Shobha "entertains" one man a day, sometimes five, sometimes more. The going rate is 30-50 rupees per visit, about \$1. A healthy percentage of her income goes to the local madam and other assorted pimps and middlemen.

She came to Allahabad's red-light district eight years ago, Shobha says, because her family was poor and she was hungry. She doesn't say whether her father pushed her or sold her into the flesh trade. Such transactions are common for rural families in Uttar Pradesh, India's most crowded state and one of its poorest.

SELLING THEIR DAUGHTERS

Village parents often sell a young daughter outright to sex traffickers, who can make a tidy profit by selling her in turn to urban pimps and brothels. You can buy a village girl in Nepal for 10,000 rupees (little more than \$200) and sell her in Delhi for up to 60,000 (nearly \$1,300), "depending on her color, texture, and size," says an observer of the trade.

Sometimes, he adds, parents "mortgage" a daughter for a contracted period — usually several years. By the time they save the money to redeem her (if that time ever comes), "she has suffered a lot."

Shobha hopes her own daughter, who lives in her home village with relatives, can escape the life she has led. As for herself, she says, "I have no hope. I have only this place."

Shobha claims to be over 30, and looks it. More than 1,100 reportedly work in Allahabad's main red-light area, and often say they're older than they really are.

Bibliocipher

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RSA ZMOS NMO CQINM

MHED ZRC LHVO,

NMODO ZRC ARDBSOCC

HYOD NMO ZMHGO

GRSA ESNQG NMO

SQSNM MHED.

VRDB KQKNOOS:
NMQDNF - NMDOO

Clue: Q = I

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Luke 23:44

"These girls usually start around age 14," says Qamar Joy Zaidi, a local Christian leader who has aided many women trapped in the trade. "By the time they are 18 or 19, they're finished." Physically exhausted, dead inside.

That's why Joy, his wife Grace, and their team of mostly female volunteers try to rescue girls from prostitution while they're young — or better still, before they become entangled in the business in the first place. Otherwise, he says, they become "hardboiled eggs," essentially beyond reach like Shobha.

'IT'S HER FATE'

Tina works a few streets over. Her mother also worked in the flesh trade, she admits. So do her sisters. It's a caste tradition that goes back as long as anyone can remember. What about her infant daughter? Will she continue the generational pattern when her time comes?

"Yes," Tina answers with chilling matter-of-factness. "It's her fate."

Sunita, a veteran prostitute from the neighboring state of Rajasthan, also was pushed into the trade by her family but she has higher hopes for her children: education, maybe a sliver of land for them to live on if she can save enough money.

"What I have done, I have done, but my children should not come here," she says, staring out the window of her madam's upstairs room.

Sunita would leave if she could, but prostitution provides what little acceptance and security she has in this society. If she left, she would have nothing.

"Where would I go?" she asks. "We don't want to be in this trade, but we have to survive. We need another vocation. We need education."

WHAT THEY NEED MOST

Food. Shelter. Acceptance. Freedom from violence, AIDS, and other sexually transmitted diseases. Literacy. Job skills. Basic civil rights. That's what these women need to have any hope of breaking the bonds of sexual slavery. Most of all, they need the saving love of Christ.

Joy and Grace Zaidi have waged a long, often lonely struggle to help women and children victimized by the vast Indian



Shobha

sex industry. They've made some enemies along the way. So far, they've received little support from the minority Christian community in north India. Respectable pastors don't want to be seen with prostitutes. Congregations don't want them showing up in church on Sunday.

When scandalized church folks question Joy about his ministry, he answers with a question: "Didn't Jesus do this?" When prostitutes ask, "Why do you help us?" he tells them what God has done for him.

Joy can deal with opposition. Years ago he was jailed for criticizing Indira Gandhi, India's late prime minister. In his jail cell, he recounts, "I found the living Christ." Grace, a widely respected community leader, ran for mayor of Allahabad a few years ago (she lost, but garnered thousands of votes in a surprisingly strong race).

Needy people of all kinds — especially women and children — find shelter and solace in their home and through several social organizations they lead. Their telephone often rings late at night about another female victim of a beating, burning or rape. Grace has helped hundreds of Indian women form economic cooperatives to escape destitution.

Together, they form a Christian "power couple" in Uttar Pradesh and a significant force for positive change, but they're grandparents now. "I'm getting old," Joy protests with a trademark wry grin. They could use some help. They're starting to get it from some evangelical friends, including Southern Baptists, who want to see the Gospel spread among both Hindu and Muslim families in Uttar Pradesh, home to 166 million people.



OFFERING GRACE — Grace Zaidi (right), a Christian community leader in north India, talks to a prostitute about ways to get out of the sex trade. Grace and her husband Joy work to convince women to leave the centuries-old caste tradition of sexual slavery among poorer families. (BP photo)